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SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

FALSE  
PROPHETS?

*A Former Insider  
Speaks Out*

Wallace D. Slattery

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FORMER INSIDER  
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## Preface

Seventh-day Adventists have espoused the teachings and prophecies of Ellen G. White for more than one hundred years. Armed with her legacy and unchallenged by an indifferent evangelical Christian church until recent decades, Adventism has multiplied to six million members spread across every continent.

Having lived under the yoke of Adventism for over 40 years, I am a witness to the joy of being liberated from its clutches by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now it is my privilege to share that wonderful news with others. The startling discoveries that led to my wife's and my leaving the SDA Church and the findings of my further research into Adventism as it compares with biblical truth are briefly explained in the pages that follow.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all those who helped me to understand the gospel for the first time in my life. Although they are too numerous to list, the names of Walter Rea, Larry Boshell, William and Joan Cetnar, Sylvia Simon, John Craven, Jim and Betty Larson, and Norman Jarnes stand out as representatives of them all. I also wish to thank my wife, Carole, for her extensive editing and help in the formulation of the thoughts you are about to read.

## 1. Cutting the White Ties

The black woman hushed the tiny group of runaways behind her. Her brow furrowed, she peered into the darkness from the clump of bushes where they hid. As the clop-clop of horses' hooves and the jingle of accouterments grew louder, she quietly lowered herself further into the leafy branches. One horse stumbled slightly over a stone in the path, and the irritated imprecation of its rider could be heard clearly through the calm.

The riders pulled up to a halt beside the foliage, their shotguns and revolvers faintly discernible through the dim light as the leader paused to light his pipe. After what seemed an eternity to the trembling group lying in silence, the slave patrol rode off into the dark. Harriet Tubman squared her shoulders and led the little flock of frightened slaves in a quick dash into a field across the road.

Harriet Tubman is as widely honored today as she was denounced in the past for her valiant battle against slavery in the 1850s and '60s. She made dozens of forays deep into the slave states and brought literally hundreds out of bondage despite a standing bounty on her head. During the Civil War she served as a spy and leader for the Union Army on many occasions, earning high praise from Northern officers for her bravery and devotion to duty.<sup>1</sup>

Why did this humble, uneducated woman repeatedly take her life into her hands and enter the very bastions of slavery to rescue people she usually did not know? Why did she stump fearlessly around the nation speaking against the great evil of slavery? Why was this poor woman such a powerful enemy of slave interests? One need only look at her life to understand her reasons.

Born into slavery in Maryland, she grew up a Christian who revolted against the unthinking acceptance of such evil. Upon learning that she would soon be sold down South, she resolved to escape. Taking her pitifully few belongings, she eluded dogs, slave patrols, and bounty hunters as she walked to freedom in Pennsylvania. Before long she returned South to rescue other family members.



But she did not stop with family. An indomitable foe of slavery, she entered the slave kingdom again and again in search of other captives to rescue. Having known all too well the bitter fruits of bondage, she was so overwhelmed by the precious gift of freedom that she *had* to share it with others. God had given her a mission, and she had no choice but to return for more hostages—even in the face of bullets, dogs, and cruel hardships.

We may look back on those days with equanimity. Today we have no black slavery in America. The quest for freedom must encounter more subtle forms of bondage, such as poverty, crime, and addiction. One of the most insidious forms of slavery today is mind control, in which one man or a group dictates the beliefs and actions of others. It is especially enslaving because the victim usually does not even know his mind is held captive. Mental control techniques are especially successful in the hands of unscrupulous and paranoid religious leaders who manipulate their followers to their own advantage, often accruing vast fortunes and power in the process.

This book obviously cannot discuss all forms of mind control. It focuses instead on one form of mental bondage I have experienced first-hand. In these pages I hope to help others escape the clutches of Seventh-day Adventism—or avoid falling into its grasp in the first place. Like Harriet Tubman, both my wife, Carole, and I were “slaves” from birth, until we too were set free. And we too have received a God-given mission to help free other captives.

We do not have the slightest malice toward Adventist members. Having “been there,” we know the agony that many (perhaps most) of its clergy experience as one revelation after another about Adventism’s founders and the shenanigans of its hierarchy have shattered lifelong illusions. A recent informal study in the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists showed that in that conference alone upwards of 70 percent of its ministers would leave the ministry if they saw their way clear!

And how could Carole and I not love Adventist believers when to forsake them would mean casting off our own family members? To the Adventist reader I say: We have been where you are! We know the guilt and fear foisted on the laity by the General Conference and the White Estate, as well as by the SDA press. We have seen and experienced the pain, fear, and misery of members trying

to understand the true meaning of the gospel through the fog of Adventism. Our message is the loving message of freedom given this world by Jesus Christ and the apostles almost two millennia ago! Praise God, dear Adventist believer; the hour of your deliverance can begin now, in the message in this book!

One warning: Do not expect this freedom to come immediately. Adventism is like layers of hardened paint; it may take quite a while to scrape away what has accumulated over time. Carole and I spent four years in study after we were first awakened before we left Adventism. But what an experience it was! Here is how it happened.

I was born and reared in the small city of Chadron in the very northwest corner of Nebraska. Both my folks were of sturdy pioneer stock, their parents having homesteaded in the area immediately after the Indian wars had culminated in the defeat of the Sioux tribe. That area was and still is truly “cowboy and Indian country,” with cattlemen and Sioux Indians making up a considerable proportion of the local population. I spent many happy hours as a boy out on my maternal grandparents’ farm nine miles from the Pine Ridge Indian reservation.

My paternal grandfather was a locally prominent frontier judge, and the Slattery family was much involved in the early “Wild West” days of the area. Alva Slattery, my great-uncle, was even a frontier scout and Pinkerton detective, with dealings with Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch—from both sides of the law!

My maternal grandfather joined Adventism before 1920, and before that my grandmother’s father, C. C. Davis, had been the leader of the Adventist schismatic “Holy flesh” movement in southern Indiana during the 1890s. And so my mother was an Adventist from her earliest years. My father was at first a Congregationalist, then an agnostic, before studying his way into Adventism in 1935.

My parents married in April of 1940, and a year later I came into the world, followed over the next 13 years by two brothers and two sisters. Our first years were poverty-stricken. My father was (and still is) a wildcatter; that is, he looked for oil wells where oil had not yet been discovered. Although he found large amounts of oil, the money usually seemed to benefit others.

Through my religious upbringing during those early years, I



learned that the entire Christian world was wrong in worshipping on Sunday and that Catholics and Protestants would soon unite and persecute us for keeping the Sabbath. Can you imagine the effect on a young boy to look around the schoolroom and believe that his classmates would someday persecute him? I also learned that we cannot know we are saved. Once, when I attended a First Christian Church vacation Bible school with a classmate, I came home and asked my mother what it meant to be saved. She replied emphatically that we are never to say that we are saved—the Adventist prophetess Sister White forbade it!<sup>2</sup>

In 1953, my father, having attained a measure of prosperity from an oil gusher near Harrisburg, Nebraska, elected to move us to Loveland, Colorado, where an Adventist church grade school and its high school, Campion Academy, are located. That was something of a culture shock: while my public school friends had been sports-minded and open, the dominant elements in the church school seemed to be psychological “basket cases,” preoccupied with curbing teenage sex and rebellion against authority. However, together with the better elements in the school, our parents set out to improve the grade school, and my eighth-grade year was much happier. My best friend DeForest Nesmith’s mother was a dynamic, saintly teacher, who could at once inspire and terrorize us students; and she along with many other fine teachers and friends made my four years at Campion Academy quite happy. I made many friendships there, some of which I still cultivate today.

My two years at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, however, were much less enjoyable. Many students rebelled against the stifling atmosphere, as they viewed it, and some of the teachers seemed unenthusiastic and uncaring. These years also provided my first inkling of the beginning rumblings of strife within Adventism.

I remember my roommate, Larry Boshell, a ministerial student, was the first to remark to me that there was trouble in the Church: M. L. Andreason, an SDA theologian, disputed the Adventist position regarding Christ’s atonement on the cross.

I also remember Arthur White, the grandson of Ellen G. White (the leading founder of the SDA Church, often known as the “Spirit of Prophecy”) and secretary of the White Estate (the legal custodian of Ellen White’s writings), coming to lecture about her ministry. In a religion class I was taking, he was challenged by a

huge, retired Army sergeant who remarked that the SDA Church in Europe did not generally accept her work as the object of divine revelation. The old sergeant went on to mention that much of Mrs. White’s writings were hidden in the White Estate vaults and could not be viewed by the public. Still vivid to me is how Elder White bristled and snapped angrily that everything relevant had already been released. (In fact, until very recently, nearly a third of Mrs. White’s writings had not been released; much of what was released previously was “sneaked” out of the vaults and has proved most embarrassing to Adventism.) This encounter left me with certain negative feelings regarding the White Estate!

My other recollection of Elder White’s visit was the Friday night vespers where he displayed the huge 18-pound family Bible that he claimed Sister White, while in vision, had held up at arm’s length for approximately 45 minutes. He challenged us students to select one of our peers strong enough to duplicate the feat. We chose a powerful young fellow sitting directly behind me. He held the Bible up for less than a minute, and we were all duly impressed with Sister White’s “supernatural” feat.

Today the White Estate admits that any evidence that she ever held up *any* large Bible for a great length of time is tenuous and cannot be validated.<sup>3</sup> My aide in my last SDA teaching position in Pennsylvania was a great-granddaughter of Sister White. I discussed this supposed event with her, and she agreed that undoubtedly it never happened. She telephoned her mother, who worked at the White Estate in Washington, D.C., and asked her, “Why do you still show that big Bible to people who come in, when you know that the event never took place?” Her mother answered, “But you should see their faces when they see it!”

I attended my junior year at Loma Linda University, an SDA school in southern California, but was forced to stay out to work the next year as my family’s finances were more precarious than ever, even though my family continued to pour 25 percent of my father’s gross income into the Church treasury. For this the local pastor offered prayers on our behalf and sent over a food basket.

As the family finances picked up in 1963, I finished my bachelor’s degree at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley in 1964 and elected to pursue a master’s degree at the University of Nebraska. Just possibly, my decision to attend there was influenced by meeting a blue-eyed blonde of Swedish extraction,

Carole Sue Spangle, through a blind date arranged by my sister Carolyn. Our relationship flourished, and we saw each other often during the fall of 1964 and the winter of 1965.

Carole's family had an Adventist background similar to mine. Coming from Illinois and Indiana as second- and third-generation Adventists, Carole's parents had been lifelong participants in "The Work," as SDA employees call their vocations in the Church. Carole had been taught *never* to question Adventism: Adventism was right, and one should never doubt it; for if you did, you were on the beginning rung of the ladder to hell. So like me, Carole had simply suppressed all questions regarding Adventism and lived carefully according to its teachings.

After our marriage in 1965 Carole and I settled down to pleasant, prosperous years of teaching and graduate school, where we both earned master's degrees. Our only tragedy occurred in 1968, when Bobby, our first child, died of cancer. Fortunately, Carole was pregnant with William at the time, and he, along with Julie (born in 1970) and David (born in 1973), enriched our home.

The next big break in our lives occurred in 1973. I began looking for other employment as it became apparent that the private school system I worked for was going bankrupt. Learning that the Omaha Adventist Junior Academy needed a teaching principal, I applied for the position and was accepted. After two years in Omaha the Southeastern California Conference called me to California to work as a principal, first at Orangewood Elementary School and then at Ontario SDA School.

In 1975 my Union College roommate, Larry Boshell, along with a mutual friend, Wayne Anderson, left the ministry—and Adventism. Two years later, when Larry and his family visited us in Brea, California, where we were living, I became disturbingly aware that something was terribly wrong with Adventism. Larry showed me one internal inconsistency in SDA teaching after another that I could not answer: Why were Sister White's prophecies about last-day events not coming true? Why was the White Estate so secretive about her writings? Why were the SDA responses to Ron Numbers's new book *Prophetess of Health*<sup>4</sup> so ineffective and evasive?

Having been confronted with these seemingly insoluble problems, I began to research the Ellen White question in my spare time from graduate studies at Loma Linda University during the next

summer. Could it be that Sister White *had* made mistakes of real consequence in her writings? We had been taught that there were *none*. Could it be that those proclaimed "magnificent writings" were not actually all her work? I had read F. D. Nichol's book, *Ellen White and Her Critics*,<sup>5</sup> and had been convinced that her critics were wrong on every count—but unanswerable questions continued to plague me.

In the fall of 1978 I made a new acquaintance, an Adventist woman knowledgeable in the advanced research going on in scholarly Adventist circles. She introduced me to Walter Rae's work regarding Ellen White's copying. She also loaned me an issue of *Spectrum*, an official scholarly journal of Adventism, in which appeared an article containing the minutes of the "long-lost" 1919 Bible Conference.<sup>6</sup> In those minutes A. G. Daniels, the General Conference president, discussed openly many problems relating to Mrs. White, including questions of whether the various physical phenomena associated with her visions ever actually occurred and the problems of her copying and her senility in her old age. Much of the discussion at the conference centered on how the "brethren" of the Church could be gently informed of these new findings. Finally, Daniels said he thought it best that the minutes of the meeting simply be stored on a shelf for the next fifty years! He succeeded beyond his expectations—the minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference were "lost" until 1978!

After reading those Bible Conference minutes, I was convinced that something was rotten in the White Estate. But how could I tell Carole? She had been hostile when those "apostates," Larry and his family, had shown up at our place, and she had steadfastly condemned the slightest movement away from traditional Adventism. And so I "casually" dropped the *Spectrum* article on the bed and told Carole, "Here's an interesting article I thought you might want to read."

Carole read the article, but her only comment was, "What do you want to do, leave the Church?" That was certainly beyond my wildest imaginings, and I emphatically denied any such "wicked" ideas. In fact, I became more alarmed than ever over my continuing doubts and decided to take them to Alex, the only local Seventh-day Adventist minister I held much respect for because of his learning and high intellect. I also felt I could trust him with such confidential matters as my concerns—I had heard of Adventist



workers who had taken their doubts to other workers only to be tattled on. Alex agreed to hear my concerns over what I had learned, but I was shocked that by the end of our second meeting this genuinely brilliant minister was reduced to repeating over and over, "Nevertheless, I believe in the Spirit of Prophecy [Ellen White]." Needless to say, such groundless belief did not reassure me!

Evidences of fanaticism in the Ontario SDA school also contributed to my doubts. While I was moving toward an increasingly more evangelical stand, the pastor continued to teach an extremely right-wing form of perfectionism. I am convinced that he kept his church in line through fear: Anyone who disagreed with his teachings was simply "frozen out" of the local church. Several of the best members were driven out this way.

In one memorable church board meeting a visiting Adventist who was teaching "A Better Way," a highly perfectionistic course of study, remarked that he had not sinned for two years! This led Daryl, our school board chairman, to call me afterwards and exclaim: "Did you hear that? He *twice* said he had stopped sinning for two years!" Daryl and his family soon began attending another SDA church in the area.

Fanaticism infected the Ontario church, as well. The pastor's fine son, Jimmy, was lost on Mt. Whitney, and many members volunteered to travel to the area to search for him. At least one member had a widely credited "vision" in which he "saw" Jimmy lying injured in a mountain cave awaiting rescue! Jimmy's broken body was found a few days later at the foot of a high cliff from which he had fallen. His tragic death had been instantaneous.

I also remember the youth speech choir, which performed in churches throughout California. Several members gave stirring accounts of their visit to Elmshave, the last home of Ellen White. They described their prayer circle in Mrs. White's bedroom, where they could "feel" the room tipping this way and that as angels landed on the floor around them! There was scarcely a dry eye in the church. Mine were dry—I had heard too many such stories to accept this as genuine.

Finally in April of 1980 I agonizingly told Carole of my problems with believing the traditional SDA concept of Sister White. When broaching the subject it took me so long (half an hour) to get over the preliminaries that, before I could come to the point, Carole was

convinced I was womanizing! When at last I explained my misgivings, she was shocked. She went to her parents, apprized them of my thoughts, and asked them if she should divorce me! My mother-in-law, bless her heart, told Carole to stay with me.

Carole then called Norman Jarnes, an old friend of hers and editor of *Verdict* magazine, and asked him if my facts were straight. Norman confirmed that they were but said we shouldn't "throw the baby out with the bath"; despite startling admissions by the White Estate, we should simply modify our approach to Sister White. He also promised to send some recent research by Robert Brinsmead about the SDA Sanctuary doctrine. This satisfied me, but not Carole, and several tense days passed with me sleeping on the couch before things returned to normal. The materials from Norman—they went under the couch on arrival!

That summer of 1980 I continued my research at the Loma Linda University library. A pattern became increasingly clearer—all paths seemed to lead to Walter Rea, pastor of the Long Beach SDA church. He was the scholar who had first reported the extent of Ellen White's copying. In early August 1980 I telephoned Elder Rea and arranged to meet him at his house.

What I saw there was astonishing. He showed me major sections in nearly all of Mrs. White's writings, then documented their origins from other writers. I estimated then that 70 percent of her writings had come from other sources, and this estimate has held up under examination. He also furnished me with extensive documentation that directly contradicted many of Adventism's assertions about her teachings and claims.

This all took place on a Friday afternoon. I took the materials home and studied them the rest of that day. Sabbath afternoon, after lunch, I showed Carole the materials, particularly the copying samples. She was as shattered as I. We could see that the portrait of Ellen White presented by Adventism—as an almost sinless being who *never* made mistakes of substance in her writings, who received virtually all her messages directly from God's angel—was an utter and deliberate lie!

Although Adventism now claims that people who are disillusioned with Sister White are largely those who believed in word-by-word dictation to her from heaven, Carole and I never had been taught that Ellen White received her messages dictated verbatim from an angel. We were prepared to accept such minor mistakes as

might be made by any witness to any happening; that accorded with what we had been taught. But we were also taught that relevant factual and theological errors simply did not occur in Sister White's writings—after all, her messages came directly from heaven. We were also unprepared to believe that a true prophetess and her successors would deliberately suppress damaging facts and deceive the brethren about the sources of her writings—a deception freely admitted by the White Estate today, after many years of denial.

But, said Carole, perhaps Walter Rea's information was fraudulent; perhaps *his* documentation had no basis. She called Norman Jarnes again. This time he told her not only that the information was correct but also that he and his colleagues were now forced to conclude that Mrs. White was indeed a false prophet.

Carole was still unsatisfied. Whom else did she respect that she could contact? She called John Toewes, formerly the assistant pastor of the Anaheim SDA church where we had been members before our transfer to the Ontario church. John was a brilliant, dynamic pastor of the Imperial Beach church in San Diego. His answer jolted her: Yes, Mrs. White was clearly a fraud; Adventism was wrong in its dependence upon her, as well as in its understanding of the gospel; and John's entire church was withdrawing from Adventism!

About this time my sister and brother-in-law, Virginia and Thom, visited us. We shared our alarming news with them; they were stunned. Thom called my other sister and brother-in-law, Carolyn and Ron, and disclosed our "heresy" to them. In turn, Ron called my conference education director *twice* to ensure that I would be fired!

Fortunately, the education director had a cool head on his shoulders. He merely called me in to the office and found that I was somewhat disillusioned and searching for the truth. After a pleasant discussion, he told me to continue to search out my beliefs and send him a letter delineating my stand.

A week later, friends of John Toewes, the Jim Larsons, showed up at our front door with a copy of Robert Brinsmead's outstanding new book, *Judged by the Gospel*.<sup>7</sup> This book actually inspired me to stay within Adventism. It showed the basic fallacies and legends of "Whiteolatry"—the unthinking adulation of Sister White's teachings—as well as the fallacies of the old Adventist perfection-

ism. It still accepted Mrs. White's basic message as divinely inspired but pointed toward the real gospel of salvation by faith alone.

Based on this belief I wrote a letter to the conference education director reaffirming my basic faith in the inspiration of Sister White. Having settled this matter for the present, I turned my attention to the problems brought upon the Ontario church school by the pastor's right-wing philosophy.

He had imported a speaker from the Weimar Institute (an extreme, perfectionistic SDA organization) to expound the virtues of a work-study program for the elementary school, in which students in grades 1-8 would spend half of each school day, as well as part of each Sunday, working in janitorial and farm duties on the school grounds—for free! I too had propounded *some* work-study all along, but nothing so drastic as this. Since such a program would obviously lessen the time spent in the basic studies—the three R's—I opposed it. Aided by his loyal followers on the school board, however, the pastor got his way. His thinking was such that he told me he would carry out the program even if it forced enrollment from the present 75-80 students down to 30-35! In this he succeeded; the year after I left enrollment dropped to approximately 30 students, resulting in much bitterness on the part of students, parents, teachers, and board members. But he got his way, and his wife, the new principal, followed the policy rigidly.

In 1981 I accepted a position as principal of a church school in eastern Pennsylvania, in what was supposedly a "gospel-oriented" church. It was there that we began to realize how far the gospel had already taken us in our thinking and how rigid and fearful Adventism really makes people; for we found that our questions and statements aroused consternation and suspicion among church members. I vividly remember the Sabbath that Mike Clute, an extreme right-wing Adventist writer, showed up in church. A good church member marched up to Carole and denounced us for bringing this "agent of Satan" into the church; we were splitting the church into factions that hated each other. The truth was that we had had nothing whatever to do with Clute's coming to church and were in total disagreement with his philosophy! As it turned out, word quickly spread throughout the congregation that "the church school teacher doesn't believe in Sister White!" Well, I did in my own way at that time, but in Adventism



any suspicion of deviation from the "party line" automatically destroys one's credibility with the membership.

I left the church school—and Adventist employment—in the spring of 1983 and continued intensive work on my MBA at Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. Meanwhile Carole and I studied Adventism's doctrines in the light of the Bible *for the first time in our lives*. We found that *all* of Adventism's unique doctrines are emphatically contradicted by Scripture! This too came as an enormous blow, because we had been taught from the cradle that SDA doctrines are biblically invincible.

In March of 1984 Carole and I resigned from the Seventh-day Adventist Church and began attending a local Presbyterian church.

The local Adventist pastor could not accept our resignation as a product of our disbelief in Adventism's doctrines. I have been in enough Adventist church board meetings to realize that preachers try to label all defections from church membership as being caused either by bitterness over unkind treatment (all too common in many SDA churches) or by backsliding. But we were not backsliders; nor would we let him, try as he may, label us as bitter. Our decision to leave Adventism was based on the realization of just how unscriptural and historically false the claims of Adventism are.

Since then our family has prospered. In the spring of 1984 I accepted the position of Dean at Dickinson Business School. Here young men and women prepare for vocations in secretarial, computer, and accounting fields. I thank God for a loving staff and student body; I see miracles of transformation in this "mission field" every day. Carole is occupied full time as a wife and mother. Bill, our oldest, graduated from Yale in 1988, and both he and Julie now attend Juilliard Music School in New York City, preparing to become professional violinists. Our youngest, David, is accumulating a very impressive resume with plays, acting, and so forth. Best of all we understand the freedom and great *gift* of the gospel of Christ! Only a former Adventist or other cult member can comprehend the peace and security of knowing that he or she is saved by accepting the gift of Christ's death and resurrection.

Our happiness is shared with Carolyn and Ron too! A year after Ron tried to have me fired, Carolyn called us to apologize and ask what the facts regarding Adventism really were. She and Ron literally studied their way out of Adventism into Christianity. We

continue to pray for the rest of our families.

With our peace and freedom, however, has come a new God-given mission—a mission of truth and grace to those who have been or are being drawn into the grasp of Adventist deception. Adventism controls its adherents through fear and guilt. Its leaders covet the enormous revenues and power they receive from the laity. They will not hesitate to employ all the brainwashing techniques available to them to hold members under their spell. But the gospel tears the blinders away!

The remaining chapters offer a former insider's view of Seventh-day Adventism. We seek no profit or power from freeing church members from Adventism—just the utter joy of leading honest seekers out of their mental slavery. "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

## 2. The History and Teachings of Seventh-Day Adventism

### *How Did Adventism Arise?*

Adventism is a product of the great religious revivals that repeatedly swept through America, especially the "burnt-over" districts of New England and New York, in the early nineteenth century. William Miller, a God-fearing farmer and veteran of the War of 1812, became convinced through his study of the Bible that the 2,300 prophetic days of Daniel 8:14 represented 2,300 years, beginning in 457 B.C. with the decree of Artaxerxes I to rebuild Jerusalem, and continuing down to 1843 or 1844 when Christ would return to Earth. He began preaching this message in the 1820s and continued into the 1840s. His message gathered perhaps a million adherents through the Middle Atlantic and New England states. When Jesus did not come in March of 1844, as he had projected, Miller accepted the chronology espoused by S. S. Snow, a strange fellow who rode around the countryside in a long white robe, calling himself Elijah. This particular chronology, held only by the obscure Karaite Hebrew sect, showed that the 2,300 years would end on October 22, 1844.

The psychological shock of the Great Disappointment, as the "nonevent" on that night came to be called, was enormous and terrible. Many thousands of Adventist believers had stayed up all night awaiting Christ's return—only to be grievously disappointed.

Following the Great Disappointment of 1844, Adventism's remnants divided into two movements: the Open-Door Adventists, who continued to set new dates and preach the soon-coming of Christ, and the Shut-Door movement, which maintained that probation had closed for sinners in general, that no more work for unbelievers could be carried on in the Millerite movement. Ellen Harmon, a 17-year-old girl who belonged to the latter group, taught that God had shown her in a vision that probation for the people of the Earth had closed on October 22 and that Christ would come in the immediate future.

When this did not materialize, Hiram Edson, a leader in the Shut-Door movement, got an impression that the October 22 experience merely marked a transfer of Christ's heavenly mission from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, where Jesus then began the "final atonement" for sinners. This belief was adopted by the young sect, which now commenced active mission work in the world for the first time.

About this time (the late 1840s to early 1850s) the doctrine of keeping the seventh day (Saturday) holy came into the church. Joseph Bates, an Adventist former sea captain with Seventh-day Baptist ties, convinced the believers that the Jewish Sabbath was still obligatory for Christians. When the doctrine was confirmed in a vision by Ellen Harmon White (now married to James White), it was officially adopted. This short, dynamic woman would be the pillar of fire and driving wind of Adventism for the next 65 years.

One of twin girls born in Gorham, Maine, Ellen Harmon White, or Ellen G. White, as she is commonly known, led a normal, active childhood until she was hit in the left forehead by a stone thrown by a spiteful schoolmate. The blow nearly killed her, and undoubtedly left her badly brain-damaged. Unable to continue her formal schooling, she stayed home as an invalid.

In January of 1845, three months after the Great Disappointment, she had her first vision, which confirmed the Shut-Door teaching to the other believers. From this moment her career as a "Messenger" from God was born. For the rest of her life she and her husband, James, worked to establish the Adventist Church. Often she had visions concerning various questions facing the little group. Later in life her visions seemed to fade away, being replaced by 3:00 A.M. visits from angels, who told her what to write. Even so, I'm convinced that Sister White never actually originated a new belief by means of a vision. Rather, after a question had been thoroughly discussed and a decision tentatively arrived at, she had a vision "confirming" what the Church leaders had already begun to accept.

The group was incorporated in 1861 as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Throughout the late nineteenth century the Whites gave leadership to the sect, which had its headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan. After James White's death in 1881, Sister White continued to be the elder stateswoman and counselor to the movement for many more years. She died in 1915 at the age of 87, highly



honored by her Church, but never having seen the coming of Christ she had so long predicted.

Shortly after the turn of the century the Church voted to move its headquarters to Washington, D.C., where it is still based today. The next decades were occupied peacefully with building schools, missions, and medical works throughout the world and in preaching the Adventist message worldwide.

The efforts of those pioneer builders have certainly borne fruit. Adventism today boasts the world's largest "Protestant" school system. Its great universities, Loma Linda (California) and Andrews (Michigan), enjoy high reputations, along with its colleges distributed around the world. Adventism today boasts over six million members, and its worldwide budget is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, supporting thousands of employees, or workers as they are called. But in spite of this prosperity, some of its greatest crises have struck Adventism in the past two decades.

First, Dr. Desmond Ford, a brilliant, highly respected Australian Adventist scholar, announced that the Adventist belief that Christ entered the Most Holy Place on October 22, 1844, was unbiblical, thus striking at the very heart of Adventism. Although Dr. Ford was defrocked as a minister, his influence has remained powerful both within and outside of Adventist circles.

Second, Elder Walter Rea—a Long Beach, California, SDA minister, who had long been a strong proponent of Ellen White's divine revelation—discovered through his scholarly study of nineteenth-century religious books that Sister White had paraphrased into her own writings enormous amounts of the writings of other divines. Instead of being a humble, unlettered prophet who simply wrote out angelic messages, she was actually a highly literate woman with a library of over 1,200 books, who drew widely from contemporary authors in her work.

To say that his discoveries produced consternation among General Conference circles is to put it mildly. A special committee met in Glendale, California, in 1980 to hear his presentation. Having heard the Glendale meeting tapes, I am left with two impressions foremost: (1) The committee recognized the great significance of the amount of copying that Sister White had done. (2) The committee actually spent a majority of its time discussing how to best present Rea's findings to the general Adventist population in ways least likely to destroy people's faith in Sister White.<sup>1</sup>

Coupled with this came new admissions by Robert Olson and Ron Graybill of the White Estate: Mrs. White had made mistakes in her writings and teachings; she had even copied theology and materials for her visions from the writings of others. These admissions had never been made before.<sup>2</sup>

The new picture of Mrs. White being promulgated by Adventism today is that of a brilliant scholar who made wide use of others' works to better illustrate what God told her. A recent official SDA article describes her work thus:

If we think that God dictated precise words to Ellen White and used her purely as a mouthpiece and as a programmed channel of communication, then, of course, we will be disturbed by her practice of using other authors. This practice negates her verbal inspiration. However, if we regard inspiration as a divine power that is channelled through human personality, culture, education, and other individual human factors, then we recognize that this human context does shape, colour, and give emphasis and atmosphere to such inspiration. . . . As one scholar rightly remarked about the copying done by Ellen White, "At least it shows that she was a reader!"<sup>3</sup>

Although today most Seventh-day Adventists accept this line of reasoning at least partially, I believe it has inspired more passivity and nominalism than ever before among church members.

The third great shock to Adventism came in 1983 with the collapse into bankruptcy of Dr. Donald Davenport's financial schemes. An influential Adventist, Davenport had ties with and access to even the highest officers in the General Conference, and he used this influence to get loans totalling \$40 million from denominational administrative divisions (conferences and unions) throughout the North American Division. He even borrowed money from Elder R. H. Pierson, then president of the General Conference, as well as from other high Church officials, and returned it with especially high interest rates.

Exactly what went wrong with Davenport's dealings is still not clear, but there has been speculation that he conducted an illegal "pyramid" or "Ponzi" scheme, in which he paid off his earlier loans with money invested by latecomers. One fact remains certain: hundreds of large and small Adventist institutions and investors were harmed by this get-rich-quick scheme, including a

lot of little-old-lady retirees.<sup>4</sup> Adventism, which has always discouraged its members from speculative enterprise, was caught with its hands in a get-rich-quick cookie jar!

### *What Does Seventh-Day Adventism Teach?*

Adventism has a number of doctrines that set it apart from orthodox Christianity. (I do not include the imminent second coming of Christ in these unique doctrines, as this—variously understood—has been a traditional tenet of Christianity.)

1. *The Sabbath.* Seventh-day Adventism grounds its membership from the cradle to the grave in the “scriptural obligation” to keep the Jewish Sabbath. Adventists believe that from Friday sundown until Saturday sundown they must do nothing more than is absolutely necessary to carry on life, with the exception of religious observances. Disallowed activities include TV watching, secular radio listening, sports, one’s vocation (with exception of medical services and the ministry), and school study.

2. *An emphasis on Old Testament dietary laws and on vegetarianism.* Adventism teaches that the Old Testament dietary laws of Leviticus 11 still apply to everyone. Thus pork, scaleless fish, shellfish, birds other than fowl, reptiles, and most mammals are forbidden foods. Adventism also emphasizes vegetarianism, believing that meat is becoming more unacceptable for food as time progresses. Any intake of alcohol is forbidden, along with smoking and of course, illegal drugs. Coffee and tea are also heavily frowned upon.

3. *The atonement and the sanctuary.* Where Christianity has always taught that the atonement for our sins was completed at the cross, Adventism teaches that it is an ongoing event. “We dissent,” Adventism says, “from the view that the Atonement was made upon the cross as is generally held.”<sup>5</sup> This view is maintained in order to accommodate the SDA doctrine that Christ entered the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844, having ministered only in the Holy Place from the time of his ascent into heaven. This is the *only unique* SDA doctrine, as all other doctrines are shared by various other sects and cults.

4. *Redemption.* Adventism is divided into right and left wings regarding salvation. The left wing comes close to evangelical Christian theology, believing that salvation comes from accep-

tance of Christ alone. It *does* differ from evangelical Christianity in its belief that the “fruits of the Spirit” include Sabbath-keeping, dietary law observance, and so forth.

The right wing of Adventism teaches that at conversion God forgives one’s sins up to that point and provides the sinner opportunity to become sinless over a period of time through an ever-closer relationship with Christ. It also teaches that Christ was born with the same *tendency* to sin as every person, thus showing mankind that one can become sinless! Interestingly, both sides “prove” their respective cases with Sister White’s writings, because she herself vacillated between a perfectionistic stand and a more “justification by faith” position.

5. *The divine mission of Ellen G. White as the Messenger of God.* Here again Adventism seems to divide itself into right and left wings. The right wing uses Mrs. White even more heavily than it does the Bible and considers her to be the equal of, if not superior to, the Bible for three reasons: (1) she is more contemporary to us than were Bible writers; (2) we have her original manuscripts and (3) she is more detailed and easier to understand than were Bible writers.<sup>6</sup> Although the right wing will generally deny that its adherents hold her to be superior to the Bible, right-wing Adventist literature clearly shows a greater use of her writings than of the Bible.

The left wing is more ambivalent concerning Mrs. White. Nowadays one of its favorite lines seems to be, “Oh, we don’t need her writings to justify our stand as Adventists anyway.” They recognize her mistakes and her unethical copying but justify these as being no worse than the Bible writers’ use of source materials by divine inspiration. At times, it seems that the left wing would like to see her quietly fade away and stop being an embarrassment to the Church.

Belief in Mrs. White’s divine inspiration is part of the 1980 Dallas Statement of Beliefs, but its application is left to the believer.<sup>7</sup> Most Adventists today unquestioningly accept her in principle, but “pick and choose” which of her dictates they will obey or ignore. Even so, Adventists tend to view obeying all of her dictates (at least those they choose to follow) as a necessary part of their spiritual process of growth (sanctification).

Inevitably, this leads to conundrums. In 1984 we heard of an SDA bride-to-be whose mother—strictly devoted to Sister White—



insisted that the wedding cake must not be white cake (no pun intended) because of the sugar content. The girl demurred and suggested a carrot cake instead. The mother was enthusiastic until she realized that carrot cake contains both carrots and pineapple—fruit and vegetable together—a no-no. Then she insisted that one or the other of the ingredients be dropped! I don't know what the bride did to resolve this crisis. Perhaps she served soybean cake!

Other Adventist teachings at variance with orthodox Christianity include belief in soul sleep (that the soul of the dead is unconscious, and therefore dead itself, until the resurrection at Christ's return) and taboos on all theater attendance, all dancing, and most kinds of jewelry, including wedding rings. Needless to say, this last point has stirred a lot of heated discussion in the Church, and the denomination has elected to make it an individual matter of conscience.

6. *Prophecy.* Adventism, because of its origins, emphasizes an interpretation of prophecy developed during the nineteenth century. Usually its evangelistic meetings are billed as "Prophetic Seminars," which then lead into other Adventist doctrines. The evangelists are normally not introduced as Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but merely as "ministers of the gospel," and the seminars are usually held in some building other than an Adventist church for the first few meetings, a nifty little piece of deception in itself.

According to the Adventist prophetic schema, each prophetic "day" mentioned in the Bible, especially in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation, stands for a year of chronological time. Thus Adventism teaches that the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 extends from 457 B.C., when the Persian ruler Artaxerxes ordered that Jerusalem be fully rebuilt, to 1844 when Christ entered the Most Holy Place to investigate the saints and offer "final" atonement.

Coming down to the present, Adventism teaches that since it keeps all ten of the Commandments and has a latter-day propheticess in Sister White, who is often called the "Spirit of Prophecy," it alone meets the requisites for the remnant church of Revelation 12:17. According to this theology all other churches make up Babylon. In the end of time "apostate Protestantism" (all other Protestant churches) will join hands with Catholicism and Spiritualism to rule the world.

The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power [Catholicism]; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country [U.S.A.] will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.<sup>8</sup>

This evil conglomerate will be led politically by the United States, which will in turn control the world. There will come a great period of awful trouble. A worldwide law will be passed *requiring* everyone to observe Sunday as the sacred day of rest. In Adventist parlance the "mark of the beast" of Revelation 13:16-18 is Sunday observance. This law will force the Adventist Church, or its disorganized remnant, into hiding as the object of fierce persecution. Probation will close for mankind with the passage of this Sunday law, meaning that the Seventh-day Sabbath-keepers are "saved" (while all others are "lost"). Then the seven last plagues will fall.

About a year after probation closes, while the terrible plagues ruin the Earth, the forces of evil will corner the small remnant of Adventist believers. Suddenly great darkness will smite the Earth; the voice of God will speak and give the day and hour of his return to his followers (shades of William Miller's date-setting). Then Christ will come in literal clouds of glory. The righteous dead will be resurrected, along with the crucifiers of Christ, who must then view him as the Ruler of the Universe. The righteous living and righteous newly resurrected dead will be carried by angels into the clouds, while the wicked, including the resurrected crucifiers of Christ, will be destroyed by Jesus' glory.

The righteous will travel with Jesus seven days through space on a sea of glass to heaven, which is beyond the astral "hole" in the belt of Orion, but will stop on an inhabited planet to observe the Sabbath, of course! The entourage then will rule peacefully in heaven for 1,000 years, during which time the righteous will examine the investigative books to satisfy themselves about the guilt of the wicked dead. Satan, meanwhile, will roam the desolate Earth, the "bottomless pit," with his angels, surveying the result of his work. However, he will not be especially discouraged but will be planning to seize rule of the universe from Christ in the future.

His opportunity will come at the end of the millennium when Christ will bring the heavenly Jerusalem to Earth, along with its cargo of saints. Christ will resurrect the wicked dead, whom Satan

will then marshall. They will work for a period of time to prepare an attack on the Holy City. Finally, everything prepared, the wicked will advance on Jerusalem.

Suddenly everyone will be frozen in place as an enormous panorama is unveiled above the Holy City, visible to every eye. The entire conflict between Christ and Satan will be shown in detail up to Calvary and Christ's triumph over death. Then each wicked individual will view his own life and guilt. Even Satan will be forced to his knees, to acknowledge Jesus as the lawful Son of God. Then fire will come from the sky and out of the earth, consuming both the wicked and Satan's angels. (Adventism teaches eternal *destruction* of the doomed, *not* eternal *punishment* with fire.) Satan will burn the longest and thus survive all others before he too dies, because he will burn for all the sins of the righteous.

After his eventual destruction, all will be re-created, and the righteous will live in perfect and eternal peace and happiness.

### 3. A Closer Look at Ellen G. White

#### *Was Ellen White a Messenger of God?*

Certainly no aspect of Adventism is more widely debated today, both within and outside of Adventism, than the question of Sister White (as Ellen White preferred to be called). Even today Adventism has difficulty determining her exact role in the Church. Seventh-day Adventists often assure others that their theology is based on the Bible alone. But these same Adventists will defend her as a "Messenger of God," almost to the death, it seems, rather than admit that she did not fit the role. And the Adventist Church has gone on official record a number of times to show that it depends on the Bible *plus* Sister White.

For example, this statement appeared in the official paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the *Review and Herald*:

Seventh-day Adventists hold that Ellen G. White performed the work of a true prophet during the seventy years of her public ministry. As Samuel was a prophet, as Jeremiah was a prophet, as John the Baptist, so we believe that Mrs. White was a prophet to the church of Christ today.<sup>1</sup>

And the official statement adopted at the Dallas General Conference of 1980 reads, "1. We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of scripture."<sup>2</sup> Also the *Adventist Review* made this startling statement:

Today "the Bible only" is the cry of some who seek to discredit Mrs. White and undermine the authority of her writings. On the surface this slogan sounds logical and appealing, but when analyzed carefully, it is seen to be *invalid*. While it is true that the Bible is the infallible revelation of God's will and the only source of doctrine, it is also true that even the Bible is to be studied in conjunction with history, archaeology, languages, and other aids. . . . Those who call for us to "study the Bible and the Bible only" should see how inconsistent it is for them to draw upon Calvin, Luther, and modern commentators in their efforts to understand the Bible, yet exclude the writings of Ellen White.<sup>3</sup> (emphasis added)



The problem with this reasoning is, of course, that Adventism's claims for Sister White go far beyond what Lutherans or Calvinists would make for the Reformers. Neither Luther nor Calvin ever claimed to be a prophet.

It can easily be seen that to the Protestant position of *sola scriptura* Adventism has added the writings of Ellen White. Although Adventism denies that Mrs. White should be included in the canon itself, it has described her as the *only infallible* commentator on the Bible and the "final court of appeal among God's people."<sup>4</sup> Thus a former president of the Adventist General Conference writes:

It is from the standpoint of light that has come through the Spirit of Prophecy that the question will be considered, believing as we do that *the Spirit of Prophecy is the only infallible interpreter of Bible principles*, since it is Christ through this agency giving the real meaning of his own word.<sup>5</sup> (emphasis added)

To my knowledge, *not once has Adventism ever taken any position on a doctrine that contradicts her teachings*. Adventism will stand or fall on her word. To prove her divine revelation to the new convert, Adventists assert that Mrs. White is in complete agreement with the Bible and then offer a number of Bible "proofs." After the convert accepts this "evidence," he is expected to follow her writings unquestioningly.

Let me parenthetically point out the difference in Adventist thinking between "inspiration" and "revelation." "Inspiration" exists where and when the influence of the Holy Spirit operates. For example, if a minister prays to God for guidance before speaking in public, he can be regarded as possessing "inspiration" in his message, although it may contain errors of fact. "Revelation" refers to direct heavenly visions, angel visitations, voice-related messages from God, and so forth. *Revelation* is, of course, what Adventism teaches actually transpired through Ellen White.

But was Sister White a true prophet? Let us examine her ministry in terms of three criteria: (1) The true prophet never writes factual mistakes of any substance. Although not all statements in Scripture are intended to represent scientific *precision*, the evangelical Christian believes that the Bible is without *error* in all that it intends to say, including a vast body of information capable of historical and scientific verification. This criterion alone excludes such error-prone modern-day "prophets" as Mary Baker Eddy,

Joseph Smith, and Jean Dixon. (2) The true prophet *never* disagrees with the Bible. Notwithstanding different interpretations of Bible doctrines, the writers of Scripture itself show remarkable unanimity in putting forth the basic gospel. Again, Smith, Eddy, and Dixon must be excluded on this basis. (3) The true prophet of God consistently maintains the highest ethical standards, especially with regard to his messages from God. If a prophet abuses scriptural ethics, he is soon exposed by God and his credibility suffers greatly. The old prophet of I Kings 13:1-26 who lied about a supposed "message" from God was immediately disgraced for his fraud. David, Moses, Peter, and other prophets sinned greatly at times, but they were also quickly exposed, and they repented.

How well does Sister White hold up under these criteria? Let us look at the mass of evidence available, much of which has come into the open only during the past decade.

# 1. Did she ever make substantive mistakes in her teachings?

## A. In describing the flood, she wrote:

At this time immense forests were buried. These have since been changed to coal, forming the extensive coal beds that now exist, and also yielding large quantities of oil. The coal and oil frequently ignite and burn beneath the surface of the earth. Thus rocks are heated, limestone is burned, and iron ore melted. *The action of the water upon the lime adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes, and fiery issues. As the fire and water come in contact with ledges of rock and ore, there are heavy explosions underground, which sound like muffled thunder. The air is hot and suffocating. Volcanic eruptions follow; and these often failing to give sufficient vent to the heated elements, the earth itself is convulsed, the ground heaves and swells like the waves of the sea, great fissures appear, and sometimes cities, villages, and burning mountains are swallowed up.*<sup>6</sup> (emphasis added)

Today we know that volcanoes are caused by internal geological pressure forcing the Earth's molten core—magma—to the surface, not by fire and water coming in contact with ledges of rock and ore.

B. In 1856 Sister White taught that there were people alive who would live to see the seven last plagues.

I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel: "Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues,

some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus."<sup>7</sup>

Of course Jesus did not come in the lifetime of anyone present at that conference. F. D. Nichol, in his defense of her statement, claims that her prophecy was conditional, that it would come true only if people fulfilled certain conditions. He points out as an example Jonah's prophecy of Ninevah's destruction, which was not fulfilled when the city repented (Jonah 3).<sup>8</sup> However there is a condition implicit in Jonah's and any such similar prophecy. There is *no* condition in Ellen's prophecy, as any perusal of it demonstrates.

Is it not apparent that *any* so-called prophet can make prophecies and later label them conditional when they do not come true? What good is prophecy if nonfulfillment can be ascribed to unspecified unfulfilled conditions?

C. In *Spiritual Gifts*, Sister White wrote:

But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, *it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast* which defaced the image of God and caused confusion everywhere. God purposed to destroy that powerful, long-lived race that had corrupted their ways before him. . . . (emphasis added)

And elsewhere in the same volume:

Every species of animal which God created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood. Since the flood *there has been amalgamation of man and beast as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals*, and in certain races of men.<sup>9</sup> (emphasis added)

These statements have given Adventism no end of problems. Nichol defends them as meaning that mankind and animals interbred promiscuously among their own kind.<sup>10</sup> However, the dictionaries tell us that "amalgamation" means "combination." Consider what happens when we interchange "combination" for "amalgamation" in these statements:

Since the flood there has been combination of man and beast as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men.

. . . it was the base crime of combination of man and beast which defaced the image of God and caused confusion everywhere. . . .

*Spectrum*, a scholarly SDA journal, printed an article, "Amalgamation of Man and Beast: What Did Ellen White Mean?" In it the author noted that W. C. White, Ellen's own son, and D. D. Robinson, her secretary, never doubted that Ellen had meant the interbreeding or crossing of man and beast.<sup>11</sup>

In 1868 Uriah Smith, a well-known Adventist pioneer and friend of the Whites, wrote a book in defense of Ellen White called *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White*. In his 52 answers to critics' objections to her work, he argued that Sister White had given the second "amalgamation" statement "for the purpose of illustrating the deep corruption and crime into which the race fell, even within a few years after the flood." He wrote:

There was amalgamation; and the effect is still visible in certain races of men. Man, those excepting the animals upon whom the effects of this work are visible, are called by the vision, "men." Now we have ever supposed that anybody that was called a man, was considered a human being.<sup>12</sup>

Smith went on to claim that the present races included some that had come into being as a result of man-animal crosses. He presented as evidence "such cases as the wild Bushmen of Africa, some tribes of the Hottentots, and perhaps the Digger Indians of our own country, etc." He went on to say that naturalists found it impossible "to tell just where the human ends and the animal begins. Can we suppose that this was so ordained of God in the beginning? Rather has not sin marred the boundaries of these two kingdoms?"<sup>13</sup> When Uriah Smith defended Ellen White's "amalgamation" statement, he clearly reflected the popular conception of his time that crosses between man and beast had created a no-man's land, populated by gorillas, chimpanzees, wild bushmen of Africa, Patagonians, and Hottentots.<sup>14</sup>

James White recommended Smith's book with the following notice in the *Review and Herald*:

The Association has just published a pamphlet entitled, "The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White, A Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scriptures." It is written by the editor of the *Review*. While carefully reading the manuscript, I felt very grateful to God that our



people could have this able defense of those views they so much love and prize, which others despise and oppose. This book is designed for very wide circulation.<sup>15</sup>

James and Ellen White took 2,000 copies of Smith's book with them to peddle at camp meetings that year, since it "proved" her claims.<sup>16</sup> Only in 1947 did an Adventist biologist, Dr. Frank Marsh, convince an SDA panel to interpret Sister White's statement to mean promiscuous interbreeding *among* species, not interbreeding between man and beast. This came decades after the scientific world had conclusively shown that man cannot interbreed with animals, and Ellen's statements were increasingly embarrassing to the Adventist community.<sup>17</sup> Of course the Bible has taught all along that man and animal cannot cross (Gen. 1:24).

D. Ellen White taught that masturbation causes cancer, small heads and busts, misshapen heads, a peculiar gait, small eyes that appear swollen at times, a sieve-like memory, spinal trouble, and weakened mental powers, among other disastrous results.<sup>18</sup> Although masturbation is a spiritually and mentally unsatisfactory method of sexual gratification, there is no medical evidence that it causes any of the diseases or health problems listed by Sister White. Actually Ellen was merely following the then-established thinking of the medical profession in her pronouncements, as she did in so many of her teachings. Indeed, her writings have often impressed me as a veritable library of Victorian thinking. For example, this explains her statements that wigs overheat the brain and needlessly excite the system.<sup>19</sup>

The White Estate has finally admitted that her masturbation and wig statements are erroneous. *Christianity Today* queried Ron Graybill and Robert Olson of the White Estate about their views of Mrs. White's mistakes regarding wigs and masturbation and printed the following:

Graybill answers this objection to White's authority by holding that her inspiration extended only to areas that directly relate to faith and practice. Olson said that although scientific details might be incorrect, the principles behind White's statements were sound (on the undesirability of masturbation, for example).<sup>20</sup>

E. In 1884 Ellen White called for celibacy among Adventists because Christ's return was so imminent:

It was not in accordance with our faith or God's will, that our missionaries should fill their hands with cares and burdens that were not essential to the work. . . . I was shown that Brother and Sister V——— had departed from God's counsel in bringing into the world children. . . . The time is and has been for years, that the bringing of children into the world is more an occasion of grief than joy. . . . Satan controls these children, and the Lord has but little to do with them. . . . *The time has come when, in one sense, they that have wives be as though they had none.*<sup>21</sup> (emphasis added)

A retired SDA states:

That testimony was read before gatherings of the people, but was evidently destroyed when it met with so much resistance, and the proof of its previous existence can be only had from those who heard it read or was [sic] an eye witness to the consternation that it caused. . . . Many tried to live up to her instructions. I sat in the Adventist church in Missoula, Montana, and heard the minister, Rollin D. Quinn, get up before the congregation and with tears streaming down his cheeks, confess that Satan had tempted him during the dark hours of the night and he had sinned but with God's help he would stand firm from now on, only to repeat the scene the following Sabbath. One minister told my father that he did not dare trust himself home with his wife, so he had her meet him at the railroad station. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Before we condemn these people for their foolishness, remember that they were taught that Sister White's orders were direct messages from the Lord God himself.

F. The most serious error ever taught by Sister White was the "Shut Door" error, promulgated from 1844 to around 1851, in which she declared that God had shown her in vision that probation for the world had closed on October 22, 1844. In 1847 she wrote:

The view about the Bridegroom's coming I had about the middle of February, 1845.

While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand.

There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher most of the time for twenty

years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their difference.) Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad.

At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. . . .

Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down, and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice.

Most of them received the vision, and *were settled upon the shut door.*<sup>23</sup> (emphasis added)

About June 20-22, 1851, she had another vision on the Shut Door:

Then I saw that Jesus prayed for his enemies, but that should not cause us or lead us to pray for the wicked world, whom God has rejected—when he prayed for his enemies, there was hope for them, when they could be benefitted and saved by his prayers, and then after he was a Mediator in the outer apartment for the whole world; but now his spirit and sympathy were withdrawn from the world, *and our sympathy must be with Jesus, and must be withdrawn from the ungodly. . . . I saw that the wicked could not be benefitted by our prayers now.*<sup>24</sup> (emphasis added)

Yet in 1884 she wrote:

For a time after the disappointment in 1844 I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.<sup>25</sup>

Here she denies precisely what she saw in her early visions! And people want to believe that she never contradicts herself?

I must emphasize that until the 1970s the Adventist Church utterly denied that she had seen in vision that probation had closed for the world. In fact, Nichol devoted approximately 50 pages of *Ellen White and Her Critics* to denying that she had ever taught the Shut Door doctrine.

Finally, in the White Estate's book, *One Hundred and One Ques-*

*tions About Ellen White and the Sanctuary*, the White Estate admitted:

*Ellen misinterpreted this vision.* She correctly understood that the day of salvation for the latter two groups [those who had either rejected or eventually left the Millerites] was past. For them the door was shut. . . . *But she incorrectly concluded that no one could accept Christ after October 22, that only the little flock remaining in the household of faith would be saved, and that everyone else would be lost.*<sup>26</sup> (emphasis added)

By Ellen White's reasoning millions of Christians would have been consigned to hell. To her it made no difference that they had rejected Miller's message because they believed the biblical admonition, ". . . you do not know on what day your Lord will come. . . . So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt. 24:42-44).

René Noorbergen, in a book widely sold and promoted by Adventist institutions, offered ten criteria (based on Deut. 18:9; Isa. 8:20; 24:20; 58:1; Jer. 28:9; Matt. 7:15-20; I Cor. 14:3-4; II Pet. 1:20, 21; and I John 4:1-3) for judging whether a prophet is of God. His third criterion states that the true prophet does not give his own private interpretation of prophecy (II Pet. 1:20).<sup>27</sup> In the example just indicated, the White Estate admits that Sister White gave her own private (wrong!) interpretation of prophecy. Since the Adventist Church accepted Noorbergen's as a legitimate defense of Ellen White, its own White Estate is inadvertently calling Sister White a false prophet!

Sister White continued to preach this false doctrine over the next five to seven years, as evidently God did not bother to correct her wrong interpretation. Thus she says in 1851:

The Holy Ghost was poured upon us, and I was taken off in the Spirit to the city of the Living God. Then I was shown that the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ *relating to the shut door* could not be separated. . . .

My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. I looked but could not see it; *for the time of their salvation is past.*<sup>28</sup> (emphasis added)

The White Estate must admit that this Shut Door doctrine was changed by events, not by another vision (there was none) correct-



ing Ellen's earlier concept. As the world rolled on, babies were born, and new converts wished to join; the Whites were forced to change their previous position excluding almost all converts. This loss of face may have brought on the mysterious five-year period from 1851 to 1856 when Sister White made no contribution to SDA writings.

Does Mrs. White fill the criterion that a messenger of God cannot teach error? Even by the White Estate's own admissions, she completely fails this test.

## 2. Did she ever contradict the Bible?

Compare some of Sister White's more astonishing statements with what the Bible teaches.

### A. Was Christ Michael the archangel?

*The Bible says no:* "Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me . . ." (Dan. 10:13, emphasis added). Moreover, "even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, *did not dare* to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 9, emphasis added). Notice that the Bible describes Michael as an archangel, or a chief heavenly prince. As such he is an *angel*, a created being, only one among other archangels, a lesser being than a member of the Godhead.

*Ellen White said yes:* "Michael, or Christ, with the angels that buried Moses, came down from Heaven, after he had remained in the grave a short time, and resurrected him, and took him to heaven."<sup>29</sup> Likewise, "the words of the angel, 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God,' show that he holds a position of high honor in the heavenly courts. When he came with a message to Daniel, he said, 'There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael (Christ) your prince'"<sup>30</sup> (emphasis added).

The average lifelong SDA will be dumbfounded to learn that orthodox Christianity does not accept that Michael is Christ. My family and I were taught from childhood that Michael's synonymy with Christ is generally accepted by Christianity, and we were astounded that this tenet is (with a few isolated exceptions) denied by Christianity.

### B. Was the plan of salvation made before the fall of mankind?

*The Bible says yes:* "Resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, *promised before the beginning of time*" (Titus 1:2,

emphasis added). Furthermore, "he chose us in him *before the creation of the world . . .*" (Eph. 1:4, emphasis added). See also I Peter 1:18-20 and II Timothy 1:9.

*Ellen White said no:* "The Kingdom of Grace was instituted immediately *after* the fall of man when a plan was devised for the redemption of the guilty race"<sup>31</sup> (emphasis added).

### C. Does God require trespass and sin offerings today?

*The Bible says no:* "But when this priest [Christ] *had offered* for all time one sacrifice for sins . . ." (Heb. 10:12, emphasis added); therefore, "there is no longer any sacrifice for sin" (Heb. 10:18). See also I Peter 1:18.

*Ellen White said yes:* "The best you can do is to bring a trespass offering to the altar of the Lord, and he will accept and pardon you"<sup>32</sup> (emphasis added).

### D. Does Christ's blood cancel sin?

*The Bible says yes:* "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins . . ." (Eph. 1:7). Likewise, "Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to *make the people holy through his own blood*" (Heb. 13:12, emphasis added).

*Ellen White said no:* "The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, *was not to cancel sin. . . . It will stand in the sanctuary until the final atonement*"<sup>33</sup> (emphasis added).

### E. Was Christ's atonement completed at the cross?

*The Bible says yes:* "For if, when we were enemies, *we were reconciled to God* by the death of his son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be saved through his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom we have now received the atonement*" (Rom. 5:10, 11, KJV, emphasis added).

*Ellen White said no:* "Now while our Great High Priest is *making the final atonement for us*, we should seek to become perfect in Christ"<sup>34</sup> (emphasis added).

### F. Did Jesus die to bring us salvation?

*The Bible says yes:* "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! . . . Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation" (Rom. 5:8, 9, 11).

*Ellen White said no:* "Christ gave his life *that man should have*

another trial. He did not die on the cross to abolish the law of God, but to secure for man a second probation"<sup>35</sup> (emphasis added).

G. Can we attain a sinless state in this life?

*The Bible says no:* "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. . . . If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives" (I John 1:8, 10). "For there is no one who does not sin . . ." (II Chron. 6:36; cf. Rom. 6:1-4).

*Ellen White said yes:* "Everyone who surrenders fully to God is given the privilege of living without sin"<sup>36</sup> (emphasis added). "We need not retain one sinful propensity."<sup>37</sup> "Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression"<sup>38</sup> (emphasis added). "In order to let Jesus into our hearts, we must stop sinning"<sup>39</sup> (emphasis added). "Christ died to make it possible for you to cease to sin"<sup>40</sup> (emphasis added).

Recall the visiting "religion instructor" at the Ontario, California, SDA church who twice said he had not sinned for two years. That is utter presumption!

H. Were sins blotted out at Calvary?

*The Bible says yes:* "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (II Cor. 5:18, 19, emphasis added). Likewise, "now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (Col. 1:22, emphasis added).

*Ellen White said no:* "The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sin is to be accomplished before the second advent of our Lord"<sup>41</sup> (emphasis added). "At the time appointed for the judgment—the close of the 2300 days in 1844—began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins"<sup>42</sup> (emphasis added).

I. Can Christians say they are saved?

*The Bible says yes:* "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us . . ." (Eph. 1:7, 8). Furthermore, "God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:4, 5, emphasis added).

*Ellen White said no:* "Those who accept the Savior, however

sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved"<sup>43</sup> (emphasis added).

In summary, Sister White contradicts the Bible in some of the most basic, simplest doctrines and teachings. Adventists may argue that some of these contradictions are minor, but can we allow Ellen White the luxury of even minor mistakes if she is a messenger of God? And besides these "minor" doctrines, her major doctrines directly contradict both the letter and spirit of the Scriptures, as will be demonstrated in later chapters.

3. Did Sister White display the proper ethics required of one who claims to write as a divine messenger?

Some of the best research relating to Mrs. White has been conducted by Walter Rea, Ron Numbers, Ron Graybill, Donald MacAdams, and others. Their findings may be summarized thus: Ellen White along with her staff paraphrased vast segments of other divines' writings to use for her own purposes. The actual amount will probably never be known, but certain facts are well documented.

A. She copied over 50 percent of *The Great Controversy* alone. "There is no question in Ellen White's mind about the overall inspiration of *The Great Controversy*, although possibly 50% or more of the material in the book was drawn from other sources," admits Robert Olson.<sup>44</sup> Dr. Donald MacAdams, who wrote his doctoral thesis on *The Great Controversy*, states that almost all paragraphs of the book should be footnoted to do their sources justice.<sup>45</sup> She even copied many pictures and tables of contents from others' books without credit!<sup>46</sup>

B. Ellen White was promiscuous in her copying, extrapolating from many authors on matters of health, history, doctrine, theology, and even what she "saw" in her visions.<sup>47</sup>

C. The SDA Church commissioned a Washington, D.C., attorney to study the issue of nineteenth-century plagiarism. His legal brief concluded that Mrs. White was not legally guilty of plagiarism by the standards of conduct of the time.<sup>48</sup> However this finding does not answer the ethical and theological questions. How can the devout Adventist call Sister White's writings the courier of divine revelation when it is now apparent that much, if not most, of the material was derived from the theological suppositions of others?

D. Walter Rea has amassed inescapable evidence that much of



her work was compiled by secretaries and family members.<sup>49</sup> To my knowledge, the White Estate has not denied this.

E. Mrs. White, along with her descendants, always denied almost all copying of others' materials. For example:

*I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision.*<sup>50</sup> (emphasis added)

In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days he speaks to them by the Testimonies of his spirit.<sup>51</sup>

Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, *yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own.*<sup>52</sup> (emphasis added)

Ellen's husband James made the following statement:

And as Mrs. White has written and spoken a hundred things, as truthful as they are beautiful and harmonious, *which cannot be found in the writings of others*, they are new to the most intelligent readers and hearers. And if they are not to be found in print, and are not brought out in sermons from the pulpit, where did Mrs. White find them? From what source has she received the new and rich thoughts which are to be found in her writings and oral addresses? *She could not have learned them from books, from the fact that they do not contain such thoughts.*<sup>53</sup> (emphasis added)

James could afford to describe her copying in such glowing terms, since he too was guilty of appropriating others' writings.<sup>54</sup>

Also, Ellen's grandson Arthur White wrote concerning the pioneers' honesty, "To Ellen White, W. C. White, and Ellen White's literary staff, there was no dishonesty, no deceiving of the people in the manner in which her work was done."<sup>55</sup> Yet Ellen's son Willie wrote privately:

In the early days of her work, *Mother was promised wisdom in the selection from the writings of others*, that would enable her to select the gems of truth from the rubbish of error. We have all seen this fulfilled, and yet *when she told me of this, she admonished me not to tell it to others.*<sup>56</sup> (emphasis added)

The only exception Mrs. White made to her denial of literary

theft followed the 1884 edition of *The Great Controversy*, which contained much unfootnoted material from other authors. John Harvey Kellogg objected so strenuously to this literary piracy that later editions of the book contained this vague disclaimer:

In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our time, similar use has been made of their published works.<sup>57</sup>

Even this statement does not give specific credits; these were inserted years later!

F. The inescapable conclusion is that Adventist leaders have been guilty of hiding important information regarding Ellen White's copying of others' writings. Adventist Elder E. H. Foster, coordinator of the Ministry of Ellen White in the Northern European Division, finally admitted in 1984:

I write here with particular reference to her usage of other authors. Although this practice was known in the earlier years of our Church's history, with the best of intentions, our leaders thought it wise not to publicize these facts.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps the Bible offers the best commentary on Sister White's copying and denial thereof:

"Therefore," declares the Lord, "*I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me.* Yes," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The Lord declares.' Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord. (Jer. 23:30-32, emphasis added)

It will shock most Adventists to learn that Sister White held herself above the health rules she imposed so strictly on her followers. Although she spoke emphatically against milk, butter,

and eggs, we have her own granddaughter's declaration that these items were commonly available on her table.<sup>59</sup> It has been documented by the White Estate that she continued to enjoy fish, chicken, and beef while ordering her followers to eschew these items (see chapter 4). More importantly, she seems to have maintained an appetite for *oysters* (unclean to Adventists). She wrote her daughter-in-law Mary Kelsey White in 1882:

Mary, if you can get me a box of herrings, fresh ones, please do so. The last ones that Willie got are bitter and old . . . if you can get a few cans of good oysters, get them. . . .<sup>60</sup>

In light of this letter, the purported statement of M. L. Andreason, a prominent Adventist theologian, claiming that Sister White used to eagerly await trains bearing fresh shellfish from San Francisco to her hometown of St. Helena, must be taken seriously.<sup>61</sup>

### *Was Sister White Unique?*

Adventism has always pointed to the unusual symptoms exhibited by Ellen White during her visions as evidence of her divine role. These manifestations, somewhat documented, include apparent lack of breathing, prostration, graceful movements, and a shining uplifted face while she was oblivious to all around her. The claim that she held up a heavy Bible for a long period of time remains unsubstantiated.<sup>62</sup>

Two facts have a direct bearing upon the validity of these claims. (1) During her childhood she suffered very severe brain damage, almost to the point of death. This alone has been known to cause astounding mental phenomena in its victims. (2) She was deeply involved in the Millerite movement, which often exhibited startling (especially to an Adventist) fanaticism: cases of prostration and visions, excitement, shouting, speaking in tongues, healings, weeping, swooning, laying on of hands, and other manifestations—many akin to the experiences common in Pentecostal churches.<sup>63</sup> Ellen White described this period in her early letters:

Sunday the power of God came upon us like a mighty rushing wind. All rose upon their feet and praised God with a loud voice . . . the sound of weeping could not be told from the voice of shouting. It was a triumphant time; all were strengthened and refreshed.<sup>64</sup>

There was one sister that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. . . . Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell [in vision] she was struck down and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of my vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice.<sup>65</sup>

A number of explanations have been raised regarding the symptoms of Sister White's visions. The earliest explanation was that of self-hypnosis. However, it seems to me that other, better explanations are possible.

Ellen White's own physicians, Dr. John Kellogg and Dr. W. J. Fairfield, described her symptoms as those of hysteria. Dr. Fairfield wrote on December 28, 1887: "You are undoubtedly right in ascribing Mrs. E. G. White's so-called visions to disease. It has been my opportunity to observe her case a good deal, covering quite a period of years, which with a full knowledge of her history from the beginning, gave me no chance to doubt her attacks to be simply hysterical trances. Age itself has almost cured her."<sup>66</sup> The chief physician at the Adventist Battle Creek Sanitarium, Dr. William Long, wrote that "Mrs. White's visions were the result of a diseased organization or condition of the brain or nervous system."<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that Sister White's public visions tended to fade out in her old age, as Drs. Kellogg and Fairfield had indicated.

The most recent explanation of Sister White's visions is that of partial-complex seizures, a form of epilepsy brought about by a severe blow to the forehead, the type of injury suffered by Sister White as a child. Grand mal and petit mal epilepsy have been discounted as an explanation by Nichol; however Nichol neglected to mention partial-complex seizures, which most nearly parallel Sister White's symptoms during visions.<sup>68</sup>

The basic research relating Ellen's visions to partial-complex seizures was conducted by Dr. Delbert Hodder, M.D., an SDA pediatrician with a subspecialty in neurology. Dr. Hodder was struck by the similarity between Sister White's visions and partial-complex seizures while reading Noorbergen's book.<sup>69</sup> Hodder noted Ellen's various manifestations: lack of awareness of surroundings, open eyes lifted upward without blinking, imperceptible breathing, normal heartbeat, symptoms of anxiety including

hand-wringing; all followed by lethargy, impaired vision and hearing, and often, mental depression.

Partial-complex seizures can occur at any time during a subject's life and may occur as the result of stress. Breathing is often imperceptible, and although eyes may remain open, the subject may be unconscious of his surroundings. The subject often displays graceful upper body movements, as well as hand-wringing. Unusual behavior may occur. Perseveration of speech—continued repeating of a word or phrase (such as "glory, glory")—often occurs. The subject often experiences illusions or hallucinations based on his own experiences, and emotions such as fear or pleasure may be enhanced. Personality traits that commonly differentiate partial-complex behavior from normal behavior include paranoia, anger, dependency, religiosity, sadness, philosophical interest, and lack of humor. These characteristics would not all appear in all patients, of course.<sup>70</sup>

Dr. Hodder describes the vivid experience of a young partial-complex patient of his who was convinced by a "vision" that the devil was out to get him. Only when Dr. Hodder read him similar experiences of other partial-complex patients did the patient accept that his "vision" was merely a manifestation of his own injured mind.

In summary: (1) Sister White did demonstrate some unusual physical phenomena to others while having visions. (2) She was deeply involved in a highly emotional movement where there were many displays of fanaticism; and some of these displays she described with obvious approval. Only when it became apparent that such fanaticism could lead to excess and disillusionment and when she discovered that other "prophets" began to rival her, did Sister White adopt a more sober worship style. (3) It is increasingly apparent that there are physiological explanations for her visions. The brain is a versatile, complex, and comparatively unknown organ, and neurologists admit we have much to learn about its function. Certainly the book has not been closed on the physical aspects of her visionary phenomena.

Most Adventists will be surprised that Sister White was not alone in having visions during the nineteenth century. Not only were there other visionaries in the Adventist movement, but other individuals outside Adventism have shown the same physical phenomena, including imperceptible breathing, open eyes, etc.

Robert Brinsmead has noted the startling similarities between the visions of Ellen White and those of Margaret MacDonald of Scotland, who also lived in the early nineteenth century. MacDonald's account of her visions also were often preceded by "I saw." Her visions showed more love and compassion than those of Sister White.<sup>71</sup>

Adventism has been guilty of relying too much on the physical manifestations of Mrs. White's visions as proof of her divine revelation. Experiences that at one time were explained as acts of God are today diagnosed and treated as diseases. I remember reading about the great impression the sudden unexplained death of a neighboring farmer made on J. N. Loughborough, an Adventist pioneer. To the local gentry it was an unexplained act of God. The modern physician probably would have diagnosed it as a stroke or heart attack. There is a good chance that today the farmer would have been diagnosed and treated beforehand, or even revived.

The same could apply to Ellen White. With modern medical techniques, her problem could have been diagnosed and treated.

### *Was Ellen White "The Spirit of Prophecy"?*

Adventism is fond of describing Ellen White as the "Spirit of Prophecy" mentioned in Revelation 19:10:

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the [T]estimony of Jesus is the [S]pirit of [P]rophecy."

Even as a believing SDA, I always wondered how Adventists could call Ellen White the "Spirit of Prophecy." The strength of that claim, based on this verse, always seemed tenuous to me.

Nowadays it is abundantly clear that her work cannot be substantiated as prophetic revelation from heaven. Even the SDA Church has been backpedaling furiously recently in its claims for her:

If we regard inspiration as a Divine power that is channeled through human personality, culture, education, and other individual human factors . . . we recognize that this human context does shape, colour, and give emphasis and atmosphere to such inspiration. . . .



As one scholar rightly remarked about the copying done by Ellen White: "At least it shows that she was a reader."<sup>72</sup>

The average minister in the pulpit could claim to have received such "inspiration" from heaven! But that is not the same thing as *divine revelation*.

The director of the Ministry of Ellen White in the Northern European Division now admits what Adventism has been forced to concede: "I believe that Ellen White had the gift of prophecy, but she is not the Spirit of Prophecy."<sup>73</sup>

## 4. Molehills Into Mountains

So much of Adventism's efforts are aimed at beliefs of little consequence. Sister White has given literally hundreds of rules for the dedicated Adventist to follow. Space does not allow for thorough discussion of them all. Here I will address only two categories of rules that make "molehills into mountains."

### *Does the Bible Teach "Health Reform"?*

Adventism has traditionally advocated "health reform." Almost every issue of the *Adventist Review* makes mention of it, and Adventist colleges emphasize courses related to medicine. In fact, Loma Linda University in southern California enjoys international fame for its fine medical, dental, and nursing schools, as well as its excellent hospital, and other health-related schools. The health reform teachings of Adventism revolve around three major doctrines.

1. The Old Testament dietary laws—prohibiting the eating of all reptiles, most insects, fish other than those possessing scales and fins, all birds other than fowl, and all mammals not having both cloven hooves and the ability to chew the cud—still apply to mankind (see Lev. 11 for details).

Adventism supports this view from both the Old and the New Testaments: God differentiated between clean and unclean animals when he told Noah to bring a male and a female animal of every kind into the ark but then directed Noah to bring in *seven* of every "clean" kind; Christ and his disciples undoubtedly followed the dietary laws; Peter's vision of unclean animals actually demonstrated that the apostles—Jews though they were—must associate freely with Gentiles, not that Christians might eat unclean animals; in such Pauline commands as Colossians 2:16 ("Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink," KJV), Paul uses "meat" simply to refer to "food."

2. Adventism teaches that vegetarianism is spiritually much preferable to inclusion of flesh in the diet. Indeed, Sister White stated that meat eaters will not be translated to heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Although it seems to me that Adventism has in recent years

backed off from equating vegetarianism with salvation, many Adventists are still zealous in their abstention from eating flesh in any form.

3. As part of Adventism's belief that a man's body is the temple of God (I Cor. 3:16-17), Adventism prohibits tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drug use among its members.

Adventism claims the "wine" of the New Testament was unfermented grape juice. Indeed, I've heard SDAs argue that Christ never ate or drank *anything* that was fermented! In the same vein, caffeinated drinks, coffee and tea, are severely frowned upon. However, I have noted that many Adventists today do not hesitate to drink caffeinated drinks even in the company of other Adventists. My strict SDA father-in-law used to be bemused at the sight of high Church officials sipping their coffee as they munched on fried chicken!

Practicing Adventists also limit their intake of legal drugs and get as much fresh air and exercise as possible. In fact, many SDAs try to live close to nature in preparation for the last days on Earth, when they expect to be a persecuted minority hiding in the hills. What such teaching does to impressionable minds of young children the reader can surmise.

But we must look at Adventism's health message strictly in the context of the Bible: Is acceptance of that message necessary for salvation or for sanctification?

Throughout history God has made a number of agreements, or covenants, with man, including covenants with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), Noah (Gen. 8), Abraham (Gen. 15), the Israelites (Exodus through Deuteronomy), David (II Sam. 7), and finally all mankind (Jew and Gentile) through Christ (Rom. 11). The provisions of each of these covenants were modified or superseded by later covenants, except the last. For example, God's covenant with Israel under Moses included many ceremonial rituals and regulations that depicted cleanliness. Laws requiring *physical* separation from anything unclean—such as unclean foods—illustrated *spiritual* separation from defilement. The ceremonial system ultimately pointed ahead to the purification from sin that only Christ could provide.

The dietary laws of Leviticus were part of that ceremonial system foreshadowing the cleansing work of Christ. Once Jesus came and, through his atoning sacrifice, washed away the sins of

all who trust him, the Old Testament ceremonies had served their purpose and were no longer in effect. Thus the dietary laws of Leviticus must be seen as part of an earlier covenant with national Israel, one that has been superseded by the new covenant in Christ.

Jesus made a remarkable statement regarding man's diet when he said to his disciples: " 'Are you so dull? . . . Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him "unclean"? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach and then out of his body.' (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean'.)" (Mark 7:18-19). Adventism has actually attempted to explain away this clear-cut passage of Scripture by claiming that it was inserted later by another writer and thus is invalid!

Other New Testament statements are even more emphatic regarding the Levitical dietary restraints:

*Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink . . . These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. . . . Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? . . . Such regulations . . . lack any value in restraining any sensual indulgence. (Col. 2:16-23, emphasis added)*

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. (I Tim. 4:1-4, emphasis added)*

It is plain that Paul describes *all* food thus, not merely *meat*. No matter what food—or meat—one tries to exclude for religious reasons, Paul's statement denies its significance. Flesh was a common part of Hebrew and Gentile diet at that time, and it must logically be included in what Paul was describing.

Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not

eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake—the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. *For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?* If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* (I Cor. 10:25-31, emphasis added)

Note that the only *food* which was specifically excluded by the New Testament from the Christian's diet was that profaned by being offered to heathen gods (Acts 15:29).

Consider Romans 14:1-3:

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. *One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.* The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and *the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.* (emphasis added)

I pray that it would be so with Adventism.

If Adventism is so concerned about the health laws of the Old Testament, let it also enforce directives against keeping bodies unburied more than 24 hours, sexual relations with a woman during her period, and a myriad of other Pentateuch rules regarding health!

As I have pointed out previously, Sister White did not hold herself to these rules, even as she enforced them upon others. "I do not preach one thing and practice another. I do not present to my hearers rules of life for them to follow while I am an exception in my own case," she wrote.<sup>2</sup> She rebuked a church member in 1890 who failed to live up to health reform: "My brother, after all the light that has been given on the diet question, your lamentations because you cannot exercise freedom in meat-eating is [*sic*] apparently similar to the complainings, lamentations, and weeping of the Children of Israel. . . . The idea of eating dead flesh is abhorrent to me; the thought of one living animal eating of the flesh of another animal is shocking."<sup>3</sup> However, Ron Graybill of the White Estate commented:

Ellen White ate beef and chicken from time to time during this period in the 1870's and down to 1892. . . . There were occasions when Mrs. White ate meat when she didn't absolutely have to during that period of time. And then in 1892 she said, "You know,

we're going to have to be more strict about this from now on." But even after 1892, and this is an interesting thing, even after 1892 for a while she ate a little fish from time to time. . . . *We hate to use the term that Numbers did—"Backsliding"—but it looks like she did become a little careless about abstinence from meat during the period—1870's to 1890's.*<sup>4</sup> (emphasis added)

The question really boils down to whether one is *spiritually* harmed if one eats meat or "unclean" foods. Again let us turn to the Bible. (1) God ate meat. In Genesis 18:7-8, Abraham killed a fine fatted calf and served it to God and two angels, who ate. (2) Jesus ate flesh on a number of occasions (e.g., fish, Luke 24:42, 43) and served it to his disciples (e.g., John 21:11-15). It is logical that Jesus, being a Jew, normally ate fowl, mutton, goat, and possibly beef. (3) Paul's denunciation of those who would restrict the diet to certain foods for religious reasons applies equally to those who require vegetarianism. "Hypocritical liars . . . forbid people to marry and abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth" (I Tim. 4:2, 3).

Adventists love to point out studies indicating that SDAs live longer than the general population, attributing this to health reform. But longevity may well be related to other factors, such as heredity, regular exercise, moderation, and a positive outlook on life. Certainly cigarette smoking, reduces the life span by several years. In any case, the SDA attempt to connect its recommended diet with salvation runs at cross currents to the Bible.

Adventism's complete ban on alcoholic beverages is equally ill-founded. In Deuteronomy 14:22-26, the Israelites are bidden to use their tithe to buy alcoholic beverages, and other things their hearts desire, and have a feast! Jesus was accused of being a glutton and drunkard because he ate and drank with publicans (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). His wine at the Last Supper, served in the springtime, from the previous fall's vintage, undoubtedly was fermented—there were no canning techniques. For that matter, any good Bible scholar will unequivocally state that the ancient Jews drank fermented—albeit watered down—wine. Adventists sometimes go to ridiculous lengths to "prove" that the wine was unfermented. I remember an SDA who claimed that the Jews kept grape juice fresh by covering it with olive oil to keep the fermenting bacteria out. Being mightily impressed with this theory, I put some fresh



grape juice in a cup and covered it with a layer of olive oil. Within a week I had a highly potent brew!

Paul admonishes others to drink a little wine for the stomach's sake (1 Tim. 5:23), but he also warns against excessive wine-drinking (Eph. 5:18; 1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 2:3). The Bible thus plainly states that drunkenness is immoral while moderate intake of fermented beverages is acceptable, even to Christ our example.

Indeed, the early Adventists followed this course of moderation. James White reported that Sister White, *five years after her health vision*, drank wine moderately.<sup>5</sup> Evidently, however, she became caught up in the great temperance crusade of the late nineteenth century and was "shown" that the Bible entirely forbids alcohol intake. The White Estate claims today that she took wine only for its vitamins and minerals! Perhaps she used it for cough syrup and spring tonic too!

#### *Does the Bible Prohibit Jewelry?*

Another ill-conceived SDA doctrine is the outright prohibition of earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings—even wedding rings. As Sister White wrote, "Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married."<sup>6</sup>

Adventism uses 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 to support this doctrine: "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." Adventism has taken Paul's counsel that women dress and act modestly and turned it into an outright prohibition on jewelry alone, often ignoring the greater concern for modesty! At the same time, Adventism has not concerned itself with the other literal requirements of modest clothing or hair styles. It is a minor point, but Ellen White normally wore her hair braided. Even more tellingly, in some Adventist churches, wealthy SDA wives parade to the front of the church in expensive furs, costly dresses, and the latest hairstyles, but without wedding bands! Such behavior robs Paul's statement of all good sense.

I remember my mother's often-repeated embarrassment when checking into motels with my father and us five children without wearing a wedding band. When my wife was pregnant with our first child, she began attending the University of Nebraska. Imagine her humiliation when she overheard two university women

discussing her: "And she's not even married!" How can the humiliation this Adventist doctrine causes women possibly be thought a call to *modesty*?

These are just a few of literally hundreds of rules in which Adventism makes "molehills into mountains." The contrast with the simple gospel is astonishing! And because of this multiplicity of rules, Adventist leaders must constantly "explain away" Scripture texts that cut through Adventism's tangled tenets. No wonder many Adventists think the Bible is contradictory or even incomprehensible! Their message is bound to discourage people, leading to neurosis or even disbelief in the Bible, something I have often witnessed. Wouldn't the Adventist believer be far happier with the pure gospel of Jesus? His love reaches and touches everyone who will listen!

## 5. The Great Advent Nonevent

The Millerite crusade caused much excitement in the Middle Atlantic and New England states. Its converts, numbering perhaps a million, looked eagerly toward Christ's second coming, as they sold off their belongings and farms to finance propagation of their message.

The Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, had diverse consequences for its followers. Some went insane and entered asylums. Others continued to set dates for Christ's return. These included James White, and perhaps Ellen.<sup>1</sup> Many also declared that probation had closed for the unbelieving.

Eventually Adventism, through the efforts of Hiram Edson and James and Ellen White, settled on its "Sanctuary doctrine." By this reckoning, Christ, who had been performing priestly functions in the Holy Place of the heavenly temple (separated from the face of God by the temple veil), entered the Most Holy Place into the presence of God himself on October 22, 1844. There Jesus "investigates" the righteous and makes atonement for the sins they have committed.

What does the Bible actually teach about Christ's ministry in heaven? Again, unlike Adventism's convoluted theology, it is simple and clear.

1. Christ began his ministry in the Most Holy Place *upon his ascension to heaven* in the A.D. 30s, not in 1844. Christ's atonement on the cross and his seating at God's right hand on the heavenly throne was the culmination of the redemptive process. As the New Testament often states, the last days began in the time of Christ, not in 1844 (see, e.g., Heb. 1:2; 9:26).

2. The New Testament clearly tells us that Jesus is seated on the heavenly throne at God's right hand and has been there since his ascension (I Cor. 15:25-27; Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 8:1). The throne of God was represented as the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament.

3. The Writer of Hebrews says:

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not

enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. . . . For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place with blood that is not his own. . . . But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Heb. 9:11, 12; 24-26)

Thus Hebrews unequivocally states that Christ entered the Most Holy Place in his moment of triumph upon his return to heaven, where he offered final atonement for our sins.

Adventism argues that since the words used in the original Greek for Most Holy Place, *ta hagia*, mean literally "the holies," this cannot mean the Most Holy Place. But look at the scriptural facts again:

A. The Hebrew words translated "Most Holy Place" in the Old Testament and *ta hagia* in the New Testament refer to the same location in the temple and the same tasks performed therein.

B. Christ served as High Priest. Only the high priest in the Old Testament was allowed into the Most Holy Place. Regular priests performed the usual duties in the Holy Place and in the courtyard.

C. Christ offered his blood as atonement for the sins of the people and for redemption once and for all. In the Old Testament, the high priest offered blood as atonement *only in the Most Holy Place* once a year (Heb. 9:7).

All other (prophetic) argument about Christ entering the Most Holy Place in 1844 is frivolous and beside the point. The scriptural teaching of Hebrews 8-10 is clear: Christ entered the Most Holy Place upon his ascension and sat upon the heavenly throne at the right hand of God the Father, having offered final atonement for the sins of the righteous.

There are many more valid challenges to Adventism's Sanctuary prophecies than this book can possibly cover. For a thorough discussion of these questions, I suggest the reader study *Judged by the Gospel*, where Robert Brinsmead examines the matter in depth.<sup>2</sup>

The Adventist Sanctuary theology is complicated, tricky, and difficult to explain, even by its own theologians. Surveys have indicated that a majority of biblical theologians in SDA colleges today do not even believe it. Thank God for a simple, clear gospel that cuts through such fairy castles like a two-edged sword!

## 6. Adventism and the Gospel

### *How Does Adventism Define the Gospel?*

Adventists have been "spreading the gospel" since the middle of the nineteenth century. They have preached in terms of "finishing the work," "preparing the people to cross the Jordan," and a host of other phrases familiar to Adventist readers. According to Adventism the gospel is a complex message comprising the entire body of Adventist doctrines, which must be absorbed over a period of time by the convert. Thus Adventist evangelistic meetings are billed as "Prophetic Seminars," in which the particular denomination is not mentioned and the evangelist is merely introduced as a "minister of the gospel." Prophecy lectures give way to lectures on the law and the Sabbath, then to the state of the dead, baptism, health reform, and finally to the bright heavenly future awaiting those who accept the Adventist message. Typically, months will run by before converts can be expected. Anything so sudden and overwhelming as the conversion of 3,000 in one day through Peter's ministry is alien to the Adventist way of evangelizing.

Although Adventism accepts in principle that the basis of Christianity is acceptance of what Christ has done for us, there is an overwhelming tendency to emphasize what we do for him out of gratitude, meaning, of course, that we must keep all aspects of Adventist teaching. Carole and I have often chuckled over discussions with various Adventists in which we emphasize the "gospel plus nothing," whereupon the SDAs say, "We agree, *but* we also have an obligation . . .," and they launch into a discourse on what we should do for God to earn his favor!

Geoffrey Paxton, author of *The Shaking of Adventism*, points out that Adventism cannot even agree among its own theologians on the attainment of salvation.<sup>1</sup> This raises the question of how a denomination that cannot even arrive at an explanation of the gospel acceptable to its members can ever preach the gospel to the world!

Ellen White is the chief cause of this confusion because of her

extreme legalism and her contradictory writings. On the one hand she writes:

Christ gave his life that man should have another trial. He did not die on the cross to abolish the law of God, but to secure for man a second probation.<sup>2</sup>

The Lord loves those little children who do right and he has promised that they shall be in his kingdom; but wicked, naughty children *God does not love*. . . . When you feel tempted to speak impatient and fretful [*sic*], remember that the Lord sees you and *will not love you if you do wrong*.<sup>3</sup> (emphasis added)

Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression.<sup>4</sup>

In order to let Jesus into our hearts, *we must stop sinning*.<sup>5</sup> (emphasis added)

*Christ died to make it possible for you to cease to sin*<sup>6</sup> (emphasis added).

But on the other hand she also wrote these beautiful gospel statements:

We must not trust in our own merits at all, but in the merits of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>7</sup>

The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought.<sup>8</sup>

Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity."<sup>9</sup>

You can imagine the confusion caused among Adventists when they compare such "Spirit of Prophecy" statements! Perhaps Ellen White sums it up for Adventism's concept of the gospel best of all when she writes:

There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject justification by faith [*sic*] that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare.<sup>10</sup>

This sad state of affairs must be attributed directly to Mrs. White's own confused statements on justification.

Is it not interesting that Adventism, which claims to have the



truth of God while calling other churches "Babylon" (confusion), cannot even agree on something so basic as justification by faith? Precisely *which* religion is confused?

### *How Does the Bible Define the Gospel?*

First, the gospel is about Christ (Rom. 1:3); it is as simple as that! Prophecy and sabbatizing or vegetarianism and the condition of the dead are nothing in comparison.<sup>11</sup> The gospel means the good news of Christ's victory. He fought our battle with the enemies of mankind and won (Col. 2:15). In a sense the gospel is a past event; it describes Christ's victory on the cross.

Second, the gospel implies a work God did *for* mankind; it is never dependent upon what a person can do for God. As Paul says in Romans 5:6-10:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. . . . God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. . . . if when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Contrast this or Jesus' compassion for the multitudes to Ellen White's attitude: She tells of a poor wretch who had undergone a series of disasters and requested special prayer from the Whites. Sister White "saw" in a dream at night that the fellow was practicing secret sin (masturbation), so she refused to pray for him until the man conquered his vice!<sup>12</sup>

Some Adventists acknowledge that the gospel implies both God's work *for* us (justification) and God's work *in* us (sanctification), but the Bible specifically states that justification is by the grace of Christ's sacrifice *alone* (Gal. 3:1-5, 10-14; Rom. 11:6). God's law demands unconditional and total obedience (Gal. 3:10); God will destroy all lawbreakers (Rom. 4:15; 7:10); all have sinned and fall short of God's law. Only Christ has lived up to God's standard (Heb. 10:5-10), and thus, he fulfilled the law (Matt. 5:17, 18). Furthermore, Jesus became our high priest, offering atonement for us in heaven (Heb. 9:7-14, 24-28). We are thus justified in God's sight. Adventism does not comprehend this grace.

One of the most pleasant aspects of our acceptance of Jesus' work *for* us is what our new faith allows God to do *in* us. Sanctifi-

cation is the *fruit* borne through our new faith! We are not saved *by* our good works, but we are saved *unto* good works (Eph. 2:8-10). Faith in Christ's saving power will bring us the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 10:14). The truly converted person is *not* fearful, worrying about his salvation; neither is he vain and arrogant, boasting of his victory over temptation. Rather, he is deeply appreciative of all that Christ has done for him, a sinner, and he can forget about self and truly *love* others. Only the person who has experienced this conversion can appreciate the significance of these words. This is indeed "good news" for the sinner who is without strength to help himself.<sup>13</sup>

The Adventist reader may be surprised to learn that the gospel principles related in this chapter are already familiar to the evangelical Christian. But evangelical Christianity, holding to the principle of "the Bible only," has never had the difficulty with the gospel Adventism experiences. Adventism would never have existed without the guiding power of Ellen White. But Adventism would never have suffered confusion over the gospel without the conflicting statements "directly from God" concerning salvation via the pen of Ellen White.

Adventism has inherent problems with the gospel. The liberality and freedom of Paul's epistles conflict strongly with the restrictive legality of Adventism. I challenge my SDA reader to study Paul's epistles in themselves, apart from the context of Ellen White's writings—the two cannot be reconciled. Years ago my wife mentioned a liberal Pauline point of doctrine to my mother-in-law, who scoffed, "Well, that's just Paul!" And yet, not only Paul but all the inspired writers of the New Testament controvert both the tone and the details of Ellen White's writings.

When the Union Army freed the slaves at the end of the Civil War, many former slaves scarcely knew what to do with their newfound freedom. Although most relished their new status and properly began to take up responsibilities as free people, others actually preferred their former status as slaves and did everything possible to maintain their old subservient relationship with "Massa." In the same way, Paul's call to freedom and maturity will not be accepted by many Adventists. Carole and I have seen looks of stark terror cross the faces of Adventists who suddenly realized that their "playpen" walls were being torn down forever by the

gospel, freeing them from Adventism's strictures!

It is true that, once freed of Adventism, many SDAs wander in confusion outside of any fold. That occurred in John Toewes's Imperial Beach, California, SDA church when nearly all active members left in August of 1980; many members left *all* faith, disillusioned with religion in general. However, this sad outcome must be laid directly at the doorstep of Adventism—because it teaches that all other churches are wicked, because it teaches that *only* Adventism constitutes true Christianity, and because its people are taught to follow blindly the dictates of its leaders. This evil philosophy obstructs the scriptural perception of its followers as surely as the slaves were emotionally handicapped by the conditions imposed by their taskmasters.

There is a beauty and freedom in the gospel already being experienced by the evangelical Christian, and this freedom is freely available to my SDA reader. That is not to imply that the way out of Adventism is easy. The Adventist whose eyes are opened will be pressured by clergy, will probably suffer estrangement from family members and friends, and will certainly lose any Church-related vocational position he or she may occupy. Yet *not one* of the people I have known to leave Adventism for the gospel has ever expressed a desire to return, even though some have experienced real suffering and even hardship as a result of that decision!

Adventism teaches the Trinity (at least after 1890), the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ (in its own way), and the power of the Golden Rule. It is to be commended for that. Adventism also *burdens* its followers with needless restrictions and rules, just as the ancient Hebrew Christians sought to burden the Galatians. Paul's divinely inspired denunciation of those Hebrews applies equally to Adventists today. Although Adventism shouts "Come out of Babylon!" to members of other churches, Adventism itself is utterly confused as to what constitutes the basis of the Christian message—the gospel. Thus Adventism itself is part of Babylon!

Do you need such a set of needless rules laid on you by often-cynical church leaders? Of course not! Come out of her! Come into the sunshine of the pure gospel, and experience new life given freely in Christ.

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# ARE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS FALSE PROPHETS?

*Wally and Carole Slattery never imagined  
they would leave Seventh-day Adventism.*

It was in their blood, both of them having grown up in Adventist families. More than that, they sincerely believed and taught that Ellen G. White was the "Spirit of Prophecy" and that Adventist teachings were gospel truth.

*Then came a series of startling discoveries  
that led the Slatterys to painstakingly reexamine  
what they had believed for some forty years.*

Are Seventh-day Adventists false prophets? Much as the Slatterys did not want to face that question, they could not avoid it. For four years they wrestled with doubts as they investigated the writings of Ellen White, the claims of SDA historians, the yoke of regulations placed on Adventist followers, and the doctrines of Adventism in comparison to what the Bible says.

In this book Wallace D. Slattery explains why he and his wife left the SDA Church—and how they found new freedom in Christ. With the sensitivity of one who has "been there" he invites those ensnared by Adventism to experience free forgiveness themselves. And by alerting readers to the dangers of SDA teachings, he equips evangelicals to minister effectively to Adventist friends, relatives, and associates.

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